

served alongside. Here are some of the comments of his peers:

"Mr. Orr brought both grace and wisdom to his work for the children of Colorado. His experience, integrity and faith informed his positions and gave meaning to his comments. On behalf of my constituents, I thank him for his efforts to better the education of every child. On behalf of myself and my family, I thank him for being a stellar example of a true public servant."—Rico Munn, 1st Congressional District, Colorado State Board of Education.

"Clair Orr is a kind and gentle man, one of great integrity and conviction. I will remember him most for these things: his insistence on abiding by the words of the Constitution, his deep-felt admiration for the soldiers who gave their lives for our country, his joy in reciting the Gettysburg Address, his stories about raising his three daughters, and his wonderful sense of humor. What I appreciated most about working with him was that even when he had a strong opinion about something, he was willing to listen to others' points of view, give them serious consideration, and compromise."—Ernie Hudak, 2nd Congressional District, Colorado State Board of Education.

"During Clair's tenure on the Colorado State Board of Education he never wavered in his oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the United States, he also referred to the Constitution quite frequently, keeping us on track. Always the Gentleman, he demonstrated quality leadership with strong convictions. His devotion and dedication to the academic achievement for all of Colorado's Children was without a doubt exemplary. The Citizens of Colorado are truly indebted to Clair for his service on our Colorado State Board of Education. I personally want to thank Clair for his mentorship, leadership and most of all friendship!"—Pamela Jo Suckla, Chairman 3rd Congressional District Colorado State Board of Education.

"Clair Orr is a unique education leader. His special attention to rural schools has opened doors of academic opportunity for hundreds of thousands of Colorado youngsters. Clair's commonsense approach to pressing issues and sweeping changes in public education has made him a true statesman among education leaders. Clair's example of hard work, boundless dedication and compassion will long be the template for how the State Board of Education operates in the future."—Bob Schaffer, State Board of Education and Former U.S. Congressman, 4th Congressional District.

"CLAIR stands for: Concern for all children, not just a few; Leadership by moving boldly forward; A passion for service in his unwavering commitment to make Colorado schools move towards excellence; Integrity drove every decision he made during his eleven years on the board; Righteousness exudes from his very presence. There was never any question of Clair's motives."—Peg Littleton, State Board of Education, 5th Congressional District

"I am honored to have served my first year on the Colorado State Board of Education

with my colleague Clair Orr. As the newest member of the board, I found that his perspective, his respect for history and his vision for the State Board of Education was critical to our success as an elected board and a cohesive working group. Without his sense of history and where we had come, we would have—and now will—lacked a critical viewpoint in our deliberations. Clair Orr will be sorely missed and I wish him all the best in his next endeavors."—Karen Middleton, State Board of Education, 7th Congressional District.

"Clair Orr has volunteered for the state of Colorado and its schoolchildren for eleven years on the State Board of Education. He has served as Chairman, and was also recently acknowledged by the National Association of State Boards of Education for his many years of distinguished service. The example that Mr. Orr has set raises the bar for all of us and serves to encourage others to give back to this great Democratic Republic. When I was first elected to the board, Mr. Orr helped get me caught up on the many issues we faced and always had time to help me out with questions. The state of Colorado owes Mr. Orr a debt of gratitude for his time and efforts."—Jared Polis, Member-At-Large, Colorado State Board of Education.

For Clair, though, it is not about appointments, awards or public recognition, it was about keeping students front and center. For this reason, he often traveled the hundreds of miles needed in order to speak at town hall meetings, meet with parents, hear from school boards, and visit with educators around Northern and Southeastern Colorado. Mr. Orr utilized the media to get his message out. He had regularly scheduled radio appearances and frequently wrote editorials for the many small town papers throughout the district.

Clair Orr is also a dedicated family man and a successful business man. He has been married over 30 years to his wife Deb and has three grown daughters. Clair is a native Colorado resident and a fourth generation farmer. Mr. Orr is founder and is Chief Executive Officer of Agtown Technologies, which specializes in water accounting programs and web development for agro-businesses. One of his top clients is the renowned Western Stock Show. He also is a real estate broker who specializes in water rights sales as well as farms and ranches.

In 2004, Clair was nominated by the Northern Colorado Business Report as an Emerging Entrepreneur. In 2003, he was named Businessman of the Year by the National Republican Committee. In 2002, he was appointed to the Presidential Business Commission.

As a former member of the Board of Education in Morgan County, Colorado, I have seen Clair Orr work firsthand, and I have witnessed his drive to improve the quality of teaching in Colorado's classrooms. Mr. Speaker, I ask that this legislative body recognize

the talents and successes of Mr. Clair Orr and join me in congratulating him on two successful and challenging terms as a State Education Board member.

SAGO, ALMA NO. 1 MINE TRAGEDIES

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 31, 2006

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, 2006 has not been kind to West Virginia's coal mining communities. First, we lost 12 miners in Sago. Then, just 17 days later, a fire broke out at the Alma No. 1 mine in Melville, trapping two men, untraceable beneath the Earth's surface. I was with the families of Ellery "Elvis" Hatfield and Don Bragg while we waited for news of the two men. We clung tightly to the hope that those men, dust-covered and weary, would emerge from the Alma mine to the hugs of grateful families. In the end, our worst fears were realized, and West Virginia lost two more brave souls.

These tragic events must be investigated by the appropriate officials. Meanwhile, with the Governor advancing new laws at the State level, I and the entire West Virginia Congressional delegation led by Senator BYRD, have already begun to respond by crafting legislative proposals at the federal level to make our mines safer places to work. The nation owes it to our coal miners to advance and enforce new and improved safety measures, and I am wholly dedicated to that endeavor.

I and the rest of the West Virginia Delegation, recently met with White House and other federal officials regarding our concern for mine safety laws and future improvements. I have also called on Congress to convene hearings on the Sago and Melville mine tragedies.

Too often in recent years, miners have expressed fears that the agency's safety mission has been diluted by concerns about costs and that the agency is, in fact, rolling back safety and health gains made since its creation. West Virginia miners toil every day to keep our Nation strong and so we are compelled to do all that we can to ensure their safety and well-being. No stone should be left unturned in the efforts to learn the causes of these tragedies. The Sago and Melville communities—and miners across the nation—deserve a full, fair and expeditious look into these critically important issues.

God bless the families who lost their loved ones in these tragedies, and God bless all who toil in our mines every day.